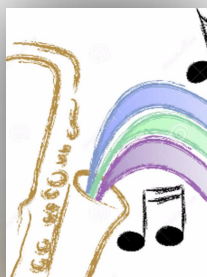




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## The Cry of the Saxophone



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### Chapter 1 by Alexis Smith

They've got lousy security at this place, I mean it. The directors always go on and on about how great this place is. It's not great; it's a dusty, old concert hall that doesn't even lock their doors properly. Absolutely lousy.

I don't know why I came here, but I've been doing it a lot. Been with Richie's crowd too much, I guess. Who knew a photographer could get tangled up in such a screwed up crowd? Like his friend Alan, he gets real messed up sometimes, and he's always like, "Man, I gotta draw. I gotta draw. Give me a pencil, man," and it's like, "Man, you don't need a pencil - you need to stop drinking," but he's like, "I gotta draw. I always draw." I always play the saxophone, so I'm thinking maybe I keep running over here to see if I could steal a misplaced sax. I don't even like the sax. I mean, my whole jazz career has been created because my parents like jazz, not me. Maybe they should be the ones breaking into concert halls. It would give them something to do besides yell at everyone.

Santiago's stares at me - he's the janitor, but he doesn't do his job. He just stares into space. I think he can't hear well, which is good, because it makes him an excellent listener. I talk to him

about Richie a lot, and he doesn't judge. Santiago's a good guy.

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baby, but Richie is still doing Richie, and she's mad, like he's a bad husband. But that's just Richie, man."

Santiago doesn't know what to say, I think. He just looks at me. "The worse part of it is that I almost hit her back. I almost hit a lady. And it was Richie's lady." I don't know why I'm getting teary, but I do. I wipe my eye - I mean, the one that Maria didn't hit. I don't care about the other one. "What's wrong with me, man? I oughta just stop. Just stop it, man. I don't know what to do. Richie won't even want me around if Maria tells him what I said. Shit, man." I'm crying now, but I don't care. Santiago isn't gonna judge. In fact, he puts his hand on my shoulder, and gives me one of his deep looks, like he's trying to send me some godly wisdom. I smile a little.

"You're a real pal, man, you are," I say as I head toward the door. I don't know what I'd do without someone like you to listen to my BS."

He looks at me with understand. I give him a wave before closing the door. I always expect to hear the lock click when I leave, but it never does. I mean, they've got lousy security at this place.

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